DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 233 UD 018 204

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TITLE Labor Market Experiences and Expectancies.
PUB DATE Mar 78
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (Toronto, Canada, March 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Attitudes; *Employment Experience; *Expectation; Goal Orientation; Labor Market; *Minority Groups; Occupational Surveys; *Psychological Patterns; Racial Differences; Self Concept; Sex Differences; Work Experience; *Working Women

ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study which measured labor market experience and its possible effects on workers' psychological expectancies. Past efforts that employed black and white men and women had made to improve their market situations are described, as well as attributions they gave for their experiences. Work or educational changes attempted by women, and their encountering of different problems from those reported by white men, are discussed. Race and sex differences in expectancies are reported. Results that illuminate some issues of relevance for women are examined. These concern the expectancy implications of their past market experiences, and the role of these experiences in accounting for their expectancy disadvantage relative to white men. The importance of psychological expectancies and self concept to job achievement are stresssed. (Author/MC)

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Labor Market Experiences and Expectancies

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Paper presented at the
American Education Research
Association, Toronto, 1978

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I want to talk today about psychological expectancies as potentially important labor market supply characteristics of women and minorities. I am reporting on analyses of data that we collected as part of the Survey Research Center's national probability sample of adults drawn for the 1972 presidential election study. I am concerned with the labor market experiences that black and white men and women reported and with the "effects" of these experiences on their current market expectancies and feelings of personal efficacy.

Before turning to our measures and what we learned, let me first explain why I believe that expectancies may be important market issues, and especially for women and minorities.

Expectancies are the assessments people make about their chances for success. They reflect the individual's past and current experiences. They change quite easily as the current situation changes. Most experimental research shows, for example, that people change expectancies easily, rapidly, and realistically in response to variations in schedules of reinforcements and success-failure feedback. It is thus reasonable that the expectancy component of motivation should be highly sensitive to labor market experiences and to interventions aimed at controlling race and sex discrimination. As opportunities expand for women and minorities, the altered conditions in the market should be reflected rather quickly in this cognitive aspect of work motivation.

Recent theoretical and empirical work on market discrimination also suggests why psychological expectancies may be important for understanding how discrimination affects the behavior of women and minorities. Until very recently the standard view about wage discrimination emphasized productivity differences as the explanation for race and sex differentials in earnings.

Since the market was viewed as a rational, competitive mechanism, most economists argued that race and sex differences in wages simply could not result from employer discrimination. Paying unequal wages to equally qualified and productive workers would threaten employer profits in a competitive market. Market discrimination would thus require the unlikely conscious collusion of all employers to agree to express their prejudices against minority and women workers. With this view of discrimination, most economists understandably believed that wage differences must result from race or sex differences in productivity (typically measured in proxy form) or in preferences that lead women and minorities to choose jobs that pay lower wages.

This standard view has been challenged in recent years. While different in emphasis, the newer hypotheses -- Phelp's (1972) statistical theory of discrimination, Bergmann's (1974) revival of the "crowding" hypothesis, various monopsonistic models -- all stress that something about the market itself may be influencing occupational differentiation and wage differences by race and sex. This suggests that workers' beliefs about the market and about their alternatives and chances for success may operate as important supply characteristics. (See Gurin, 1976.) Equally trained, equally productive workers with similar preferences may supply themselves differently if their market experiences have convinced one group that their opportunities and alternatives are more restricted. Women's and minorities' perceptions of alternatives and beliefs about opportunities that have been reinforced from their previous market experiences may further reinforce sex segregation in the labor poor and/or make for different supply elasticities for women and minorities. They may not as often apply for advanced training or change to jobs with optimal training opportunities if they have already encountered

discrimination, either in the form of wage discrimination or in trying to get into training programs. They may not as frequently ask for promotions if their previous experiences have led them to expect failure. They may be more willing to settle for lower status or lower paying jobs if they believe that their opportunities for better jobs are limited, if they are geographically less mobile, if they have less access to job information, if they know fewer people already occupying better jobs, or if they are aware that worker monopolies control access to jobs they might prefer. In short, I am suggesting that market segmentation, market imperfections, and even the less probable phenomenon of "pure wage discrimination" will affect workers' experiences in the market and through these experiences their assessments of their chances for success, alternatives open to them, and wisdom of investment efforts. If we are to understand how wages differences occur, we need to study workers' experiences in the market and the effects of these experiences on their expectancies about current and future success.

I am going to focus today on just some of the issues that we attempted to study in the national sample of black and white men and women. The broader set of issues is reported in a monograph for the National Institute of Education, which provided support for the secondary analysis of the data collected in 1972. (See Gurin and Morrison, 1976)

Today I will describe the previous efforts that employed black and white men and women had made to improve their market situations as well as the attributions they gave for their experiences. Did women and minorities try different things and run into different problems from those reported by white men, the group that has fared best in the market? I will also report the race and sex differences in expectancies. Then I will focus on results that illuminate some issues of particular relevance for women. These concern

the expectancy implications of their past market experiences, and the role of these experiences in accounting for their expectancy disadvantage, relative to white men. The results that speak more directly to the expectancy implications of the experiences of black men are not possible to cover in our limited time.

Measures of Market Experiences and Expectancies

Our measures were included in the post-election interviews that were conducted with 2,181 respondents. The analyses reported today concern those who were currently employed-- 850 white men, 542 white women, 79 black men and 100 black women.

Respondents were asked about their previous investment strategies and experiences. "Was there ever a time when you tried to change what you are doing -- for example, entered a training program, went back to school, tried to go into a different type of work -- things that would really change what you were doing." Respondents who had tried something were then asked what they had done. Three dichotomous measures were developed from responses to these questions: 1) tried v. did not try to change, 2) tried work change v. did not, 3) tried educational change v. did not. Work changes included job shifts, job training, promotions. Educational changes included attempts to get more education or training in a formal educational setting, not on the job.

Two additional questions were also treated as generalized market experience measures, although the questions did not specifically refer to the labor market. One asked whether respondents felt they had had a fair opportunity to make the most of themselves in life or whether they had been held back in some ways; the other asked whether they had been able to

satisfy most of their ambitions in life or whether they had had to settle for less than they had hoped for. The reasons given for feeling held back, settling for less than one's ambitions, and for any difficulty they had experienced in their previous "investment" or "change" efforts were coded with the same categories of attributions. Two are relevant for the measures I will talk about today. The first was the number of times across these three questions that the respondent attributed difficulties to market constraints -- lack of opportunity, lack of jobs, race or sex discrimination, plant closings, lay-offs, etc. The second was the number of times the difficulties were attributed to educational deficiencies -- lack of education, lack of specific educational credentials or qualifications. People who felt they had had fair opportunity, had satisfied most of their ambitions, or had not experienced any difficulties in carrying out the changes they had attempted were scored as experiencing no market constraints and no educational deficiencies.

Measures of Expectancies

A global employment expectancy measure asked: "If you should lose your present job, what would you say were your chances of finding another job that was just as good as your present job in all respects?" Respondents chose among four alternatives (very good, good, not so good, and not good at all). A performance based expectancy was then measured by asking how much ability respondents thought they had compared to most other people doing their kind of work. Respondents chose among four alternatives (much more, a little more, about the same, and a little less).

Respondents were also asked four questions that have been used to indicate a sense of personal efficacy in many Survey Research Center studies: "Do you think it is better to plan your life a good way ahead, or would you say life is too much a matter of luck to plan ahead very far?" When you do

make plans ahead, do you usually get to carry out things the way you expected, or do things usually come up to make you change your plans?" "Have you usually felt pretty sure that your life would work out the way you want it to, or have there been times when you haven't been sure about it?" and "some people feel they can run their lives pretty much the way they want; others feel the problems of life are sometimes too big for them. Which one are you most like?' The coefficient alpha of the summary efficacy score is .74. This sense of efficacy is far more generalized than the employment and performance expectancies and also addresses the issue of personal control of outcomes.

Race and Sex Differences in Market Experiences and Expectancies

Black and white men and women differed in the types of changes they had attempted to make to improve their market position but not in whether they had tried anything at all. Approximately the same proportion of white men (43 percent), black men (34 percent), and black women (35 percent) said they had tried to make some kind of change. Only white women differed and they only from white men: fewer white women (26 percent) reported having made some attempt at improving their market situation. The level of activity among those who had tried something was also comparable in the four groups. Approximately three-quarters of each group reported one change attempt; another fifth reported two attempts; and about five percent said they had tried three or more different things.

Men and women did differ, however, in the kinds of changes they had tried. More men (58 percent white, 56 percent black) than women (40 percent white, 18 percent black) had tried some kind of work change or advanced job training. More women (60 percent white, 82 percent black) than men (42 percent

white, 44 percent black) had reported efforts to improve their educations. Work changes were thus more distinctively male, educational changes more distinctively female. Black women particularly stood out, even compared to white women, in the predominance of educational over work changes. (See Table 1.)

We expected strong race effects in the extent to which respondents related negative experiences in trying to make these changes and in having been held back in life. We also expected that white women would report a greater sense of restriction than white men. Both sets of expectations were generally supported. Whites more often felt they had had fair opportunities to make something of their lives, had satisfied most of their ambitions, and less often attributed market difficulties to constraints in the market itself. Blacks more often felt they had been held back, had had to settle for less than they had hoped, and specifically talked about market constraints as a source of difficulty. In some respects white men stood out not only from blacks but from white women, too. They less often felt held back and less often held their own educational deficiencies responsible for difficulties they had experienced. So, although white women felt less restricted than blacks, they did feel more limited than white men and particularly by their educational credentials.

White men also held an "expectancy advantage" over the other three groups. They expressed higher employment expectancies, felt more optimistic about their performance abilities for the jobs they were holding, and scored higher in the sense of personal efficacy. If anything , these results underestimate the actual white male advantage since the employment and performance assessments were tied to the jobs these groups currently held. Both groups of women thus held lower expectancies about jobs that already pay less than

the jobs held by white men. Black men likewise expressed lower employment expectancies (although not lower performance expectancies) for lower paying jobs. If salary and quality of jobs currently held by the four groups were equated, the expectancy edge of white men would be even more pronounced.

In the remainder of my talk, I want to examine how the market experiences of women have reduced their expectancies, relative to white men. In doing this I am making some assumptions about the temporal relationship of market experiences and expectancies that are warranted, I hope, by the way the questions were worded to respondents. The experience questions were all cast in the past -- was there ever a time when you tried to change your situation -- have you ever felt held back in life, etc. The expectancy questions were all cast in the present as in the case of personal efficacy and performance expectancies, or in the future for employment expectancies.

Investment Strategies and the Expectancies of Women

We have just seen that women differed very little from men in whether they had previously tried to do something to improve their market value. Past discrimination seems not to have convinced women that it is unwise to invest in their human capital since approximately the same proportion of women and men (white women slightly less) reported having tried something. The number of investments or improvement efforts they had tried was also comparable to men. Women did differ, however, in what they had tried. More men had invested in job training and job changes to improve their situations. More women, especially black women, had invested disproportionately in acquiring additional schooling.

What were the "effects" of past investment efforts? We examined this first by running separate correlation matrices for the four groups of workers. We found that investment in job-related changes, while rarer for women, was correlated significantly for both black and white women with positive accounts of past experiences, confidence about their job performance abilities, and sense of personal efficacy. This contrasted with both groups of men. Job-related investments were largely discouraging for black men and the whole issue of work v. educational investments was just irrelevant to the expectancies and experience evaluations of white men.

Let us look more closely at the results for women. Women who had tried to improve their market situation by changing jobs or acquiring training on the job less often felt restricted by their educational qualifications (-.26 black women, $p = .01$; -.23 white women, $p = .001$). This is understandable for black women who had invested in job strategies since they were better educated than other black women who had either invested in improving their educations or hadn't tried anything at all. But years of schooling did not account for which white women had tried to make job-related changes. They seem to have learned from activity in the market that educational qualifications may not stand in their way. If women do not have experience in trying to change jobs or move into better jobs, they may unduly exaggerate the importance of educational credentials. We should remember that, compared to white men, both groups of women more often attributed difficulties they had encountered to their own educational deficiencies.

Women who had tried job-changes further expressed higher expectancies. They held higher performance expectancies (.20 black women, $p = .05$; .25 white women, $p = .001$) and felt more generally efficacious as well (.27 black women, $p = .01$; .19 white women, $p = .01$). Their expectancies of being able

to find another job at least as good as their present ones were also higher (.30 black women, $p = .01$; .09 white women, $p = .05$).

All of this suggested that part of the white male edge in expectancies might stem from differences in the investment strategies that white men and the two groups of women had tried. We tested this by running dummy regression analyses in which white men were treated as the constant, white women were coded 1 and everyone else 0 in the first dummy variable, and black women coded 1 and everyone else 0 in the second dummy variable. Significant coefficients for the two dummy variables thus indicate that being a white woman or a black woman has an effect in expectancies, specifically compared to white men. In the first analysis we also entered years of schooling as a predictor so that the black woman, white woman effects would represent differences from white men after adjusting for educational attainments. (White men had slightly more schooling than white women, significantly more than black women.) In the second analysis we added yet another predictor -- whether the respondent had tried a job change or not. The major question was whether the white male edge, represented by significant white woman and black woman effects in the first analysis, would disappear or at least be reduced by including the job investment predictor. We expected this to happen because more white men had tried job changes, white men held higher expectancies, and job investment strategies and expectancies were positively related for both groups of women.

What did we learn? First, even with education controlled white men did show an advantage in expectancies. The black woman and white woman coefficients were significant for all three expectancy measures. (See Table 3.) More important, these significant effects were no longer significant when adjustments were made for whether respondents had tried to make job changes. With

only one exception (black women's sense of personal efficacy), the dummy variable coefficients were not statistically significant when job investment as well as education was controlled. Black and white women did not express lower expectancies than white men when differences in their investment strategies were controlled.

Issues and Implications

These results are by no means definitive. This was our first effort to measure labor market experience and its possible effects on workers' expectancies. The causal chain that is implied here cannot be substantiated with cross-sectional data. Tying the expectancy measures to present job also underestimates the probable white male edge. The fact that the sample included workers of many ages also presents difficulties in trying to understand how market experiences influence expectancies and conceptions of alternatives and opportunities. If negative market experiences dampen expectancies and then depress women's and minorities' subsequent efforts to gain training or find better jobs, this probably happens most dramatically among young workers in their initial forays into the market. People who worry about the extremely high unemployment figures for urban young people express exactly this concern. Huge numbers of young people are being socialized by their initial market experiences to believe they cannot find work and that nothing they can do will materially improve the returns they receive from welfare or other means of survival. In a similar vein, we would best understand the impact of market experiences on women's expectancies if we captured their initial experiences in the market, at whatever age they occur. The mid-life entry into the market may have just as critical expectancy implications as the initial entry of much younger workers. Our cross-sectional sample inevitably taps people at many different points in

their market experience. Clearly, the issues here need to be studied longitudinally and with large samples of minority and non-minority men and women in their initial years of work experience.

Let me suggest, nonetheless, that our results, at the minimum, do raise an important question for educators and counselors who work with women. Is the imbalanced effort that both groups of women reported investing in education a reasonable strategy for women? I think this needs to be examined in two ways: 1) is it reasonable for economic returns, and 2) is it reasonable for psychological benefits, even if the personal effects are not immediately, or perhaps ever, translated into economic returns?

Counselors who work with women who are returning to the labor market or with young women who are trying to plan their economic futures wisely should be able to offer information about probable returns to various educational and job-related investment strategies. At present it is very clear, for example, that dropping out or waiting to enter the market until after child bearing and rearing carries an economic cost. Women who decide to do this at least can know rather conclusively that they will suffer an economic loss. They should also know something about the probable benefits and losses of different investment strategies. Unfortunately, most previous research, guided by human capital theory, has assumed that different types of work experiences-or-training investment should have the same wage consequences and need not be distinguished. In addition most research has only estimated rather than directly measured work experience and training. Very little has studied the impact of job shifts (from a detailed job history) as a form of human capital investment. Only a few studies have included minority as well as male and female workers in the same analysis. We know practically nothing, for example, about economic returns to training investment for black

women. The few studies that have investigated whether returns to schooling and to job experience differ for different groups of workers are far from conclusive. Some show different returns for white men and for other groups of workers. Others do not. Thus, it is much too premature to use prior research to advise whether black and white women's disproportionate effort at improving their educations is actually functional for their market success. If most women end up in female jobs (either because they prefer them or settle for them), and if employers in such jobs stress middle level educational skills as Oppenheimer (1970) suggests they do, educational investment may be the only realistic path for large numbers of women workers to improve their earnings. If male jobs become increasingly available to women, the investment strategies of the women we studied may not be as advisable. Our results should provoke some questions about what to advise women, especially since presently available evidence is far from clear that educational investments provide the best returns. These questions take on special significance, I feel, because information about educational programs and opportunities to gain training in formal educational settings presently exceed information about jobs and training opportunities in job settings. Counselors may abet the "return to school"phenomenon, not because they even think about whether that is the best strategy but because they simply know more about educational than employment possibilities.

The second set of questions that might be raised from these results concern the psychic returns to educational and job-related investments. Women who tried to make work changes were more self-confident about their job abilities, were more optimistic about finding another job as least as good as their present ones, and felt better able to control what happened in their lives. Since most people reported only one previous attempt to

improve their situations, it would be expected that job and educational investments acted as alternatives. Women who tried educational changes understandably then exhibited less confidence, lower employment expectancies, and felt less efficacious generally in life. Obviously, job and educational investments need not be alternatives, and their effects are surely not so opposite as our results seem to imply. Still, it was job rather than educational investments that had the more positive expectancy implications. This is important even if expectancies in no way subsequently influence labor market behavior. Some analyses that we carried out with housewives also indicated that job experience is associated with positive expectancy implications. Let me just briefly comment about these results since they generally support what we learned from the analyses of working women. An employment expectancy was measured by asking housewives how easily they could find a job, if they actually tried to get a job outside the home. Housewives who were better educated, had previously tried something to improve their market situation, and had worked part time during the previous year expressed considerably higher employment expectancies. The expectancy of being able to find a job easily then directly influenced current work intentions, measured as a probability of looking for a job in the year to come, even after adjusting for the earlier schooling and experience that also encouraged the intention to work. While significant for both expectancies and work intentions, education alone was not nearly as important as the combination of education and previous work experience. While the causal direction of schooling, experience, expectancies, and work intentions cannot be tied down in these cross-sectional data, the results do suggest that housewives' expectancies about being able to find employment, and their intentions of looking for a job, would be facilitated by gaining some job experience along the way, even if that is

part time. The self-confidence of women, whether presently employed out of the home or working as housewives, was greater when they had invested in job-related improvement efforts or had gained some job experience along the way.

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Table 1

Past Market Experiences of Black and White Men and Women

		White Men	White Women	Black Men	Black Women
Tried to Alter Market Position	$\bar{x}$	3.26	3.58	3.43	3.46
(1 = yes, 5 = no)	sd	1.98	1.91	1.91	1.96
		(850)	(542)	(79)	(100)
		Scheffé constrasts: White men more than white women (p. 01)			
Type of Change Attempted					
Educational		42	60	44	82
Work		58	40	56	18
		100%	100%	100%	100%
		(365)	(191)	(27)	(38)
Sense of Being Held Back	$\bar{x}$	1.77	1.97	3.56	3.38
1 = fair opportunities					
5 = held back	sd	1.56	1.71	1.93	1.97
		(850)	(542)	(79)	(100)
		Scheffé contrasts: White men less than white women (p. 03), than black men (p. 0001), than black women (p. 0001), white women less than black men (p .001) and black women (p .001)			
Sense of Having Settled for Less Than Had Hoped	$\bar{x}$	2.41	2.39	3.48	3.14
1 = satisfied most ambitions	sd	1.90	1.89	1.89	1.98
5 = settled for less					
		Scheffé contrasts: White men and women less than black men and women (p.0001)			

Table 1 (cont.)

		White Men	White Women	Black Men	Black Women
Number of times Market Constraints* mentioned in three questions (Range 0-5)	$\bar{x}$	.34	.34	.85	.83
	sd	.59	.58	.88	1.21
	Scheffé contrasts: White Men and women less than black men and women (p.0001)				
Numbers of times Educational Deficiencies mentioned* (Range 0-3)	$\bar{x}$	.17	.25	.53	.27
	sd	.42	.53	.82	.53
	Scheffé contrasts: White men less than white women (p. 06), than black men (p. 01), than black women (p. 06). White women less than black men (.01); black women less than black men (.05)				

*Since variances were significantly different, we used a more conservative alpha (following Bonferroni inequality) to determine significance of the differences in means. Since we were interested in no more than five contrasts, we used alpha /5. Therefore, an alpha of .01 was required for significance at .05.

Table 2

Expectancies and Sense of Efficacy of Black and White Men and Women

		White Men	White Women	Black Men	Black Women
Employment Expectancy					
Chances of finding another job as good as present one					
(Range 1=very good to 5=not very good)	$\bar{x}$	2.41	2.60	2.87	2.72
	sd	1.39	1.40	1.50	1.27
	Scheffé contrasts: White men higher expectancies than white women ($p = .05$), than black men ($p = .02$), than black women ($p = .06$)				
Performance Expectancies					
Compared to other people doing your kind of work, ability you think you have for the job					
(Range 1=much more to 4=a little less)	$\bar{x}$	2.32	2.49	2.38	2.57
	sd	.78	.78	.78	.68
	Scheffé contrasts: White men higher expectancies than white women ($p = .01$), than black women ($p = .03$)				
Sense of Personal Efficacy					
(Range 0-5)	$\bar{x}$	1.52	1.77	2.43	2.65
	sd	1.39	1.52	1.78	1.52
	Scheffé contrasts: White men greater than white women ($p = .002$), than black men ($p = .01$), than black women ($p = .001$); white women greater than black men ($p = .05$) and black women ($p = .0001$)				

Table 3

Regression Coefficients Attached to Being a White Woman and a Black Woman In Explaining Expectancies, First Controlling Education and then Both Education and Having Tried Job Change

(White Men Treated As Constant in Dummy Regression, Standard Errors in Parentheses)

	White Women			Black Women		
	Education Controlled	Having Tried Job Change Also Controlled	Reduction in White Male Effect	Education Controlled	Having Tried Job Change Also Controlled	Reduction in White Male Effect
Job Performance Expectancies	.109** (.047)	.043 (.077)	.066	.182* (.087)	.136 .114	.046
Sense of Personal Efficacy	.170** (.061)	.019 (.110)	.151	.696**** (.113	.508** (.128)	.108
Employment Expectancies	.191* (.087)	.141 .078	.050	.279* (.141)	.118 (.152)	.161

* p= .05
** p= .01
*** p= .001
**** p= .0001